

Friends of Mill Valley

Friends of Mill Valley works to add the voice of the community to the City's decision-making process about growth, planning, and other issues of significant interest, and to promote greater public participation in shaping successful solutions.

The community of Mill Valley needs the new Miller Avenue design to work at all levels.

It is a vital element of the community in terms of traffic, pedestrian and bicycle movement, service businesses, retail and daily shopping. As such, issues such as feel *and* parking, automobile efficiency *and* pedestrian safety, small town feel *and* sophisticated mix of cultural and commerce—are *all* required to be part of the resolution. These are not Either/Or issues but must be Both/And solutions.

No generic or formulaic solution is acceptable for Miller Avenue. The community needs Miller Avenue to remain what it has been, but to function that way at a higher level in the future.

- The thinking to date has evolved to acknowledge the complexity and different character across several different sections. This is good.
- The thinking to date has evolved sufficiently to understand that the block-by-block idiosyncrasies are good and add character. This is good.
- The thinking to date has evolved to understand the benefit and the essential nature of community participation. This is good.
- The thinking to date has evolved such that the new planning /design team has more genuine interest in listening to the community and trying to understand what they already know. This is good.

The concerns moving forward are in the detailed understanding of the interrelationship of the parts.

The design must be grounded in the *values of the community*. The highest priorities are about people, not cars. Certain values must be emphasized, reiterated and touched upon at each and every step, during each and every discussion:

1. The *existing, mature trees* have a powerful impact on the sense of the street and the community. Mill Valley's reverence for the tree, the mountain, the stream, the air is critical to understand. Destroying and removing mature, healthy trees is not a goal but a situation to be avoided. Mill Valley honors and cares about the 100-year old trees; Mill Valley likes the arboretum-like quality of the range and variety of trees already there. This sensibility needs to be reinforced—not replaced.
2. *Street parking* spaces are vital to the sustainability of the small shops and business that Mill Valley wants to retain on Miller Avenue. New design ideas which reduce parking spaces present real challenges to the strongly held desire to support and nurture local enterprise as a matter of convenience and sustainable practice. Parking impact has to be studied in conjunction with reduced parking already allowed in several large new multi-use developments. The overall impact of “underparking” new developments and

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reducing existing street spaces must be studied, understood and *avoided*. It can destroy the fragile mix that makes up Miller Avenue.

3. **Traffic and Public Transit** are critical issues. As one of only two arterial roadways, traffic must flow smoothly without creating cut-through traffic. Design that originates with a focus on the car will end with the car as the best user. We must plan for efficient transportation in 20-30 years--what about public transit, a shuttle, electric cars?
4. **Safety**—both bicycle and pedestrian—are of huge importance to the community. It must be real and legitimately thought out.
5. **Evacuation safety** is critical to Mill Valley. Reducing one of the town's two access ways to the freeway to one lane is dangerous and unnecessary. This is particularly undesirable when its main purpose is to relocate the median, an act itself necessitating the elimination of dozens of mature arboretum-quality trees.
6. **Small-town character** and charm is the essence of what makes Mill Valley home. The absence of arterial thoroughfares and the presence of more traditional streets differentiate Mill Valley from a typical suburb and lend credence to its sense of town. Miller Avenue's existing quixotic assets (changing street widths, bends and turns, re-focused views on Mt. Tam, narrower and wider streetscape, etc.) all lend small-town character and identity to Miller Avenue. These twists and turns speak volumes of the tangible history and depth that make Mill Valley a town incorporated 120 years ago. It is a town, it is a street, precisely like no other. It is our street, it is our town. Mill Valley wants its uniqueness enhanced and showcased, not bulldozed and chainsawed into a standard California suburban formula.

Intelligence and specificity must govern all decisions. The impact is larger than any one individual or sector of the community can or should control. It is the community's passageway, the place of embarkation to the larger Bay Area and back again from it after a long day away. The new design must maintain a strong sense of respect for the community by understanding that in many ways Miller Avenue is our community.

Friends of Mill Valley (FoMV) is a strictly volunteer effort of many people. Its accomplishments are the result of that collective commitment to a common vision of preserving Mill Valley's small-town character and quality of life.

Ways to get involved

1. **Join the Friends of Mill Valley email list.** Email us at info@friendsofmillvalley.org to join the list.
2. **Attend meetings.** FoMV informs you of important City Council and Planning Commission meetings.
3. **Stay engaged.** Talk to your neighbors. Help create the community in which you want to live.
4. **Visit our website.** We're open 24 hours a day at www.friendsofmillvalley.org.
5. **Donate.** Support our efforts with a check payable to "Friends of Mill Valley". (see address below)

Contact Us

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